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1988

AFRICAN LANGUAGE MATERIALS

IN THE

BOSTON UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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compiled by

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER

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The first edition of this guide was compiled in 1979 by Andrea Van Hoosen, then a student in the African Studies Center, with the guidance of Ivan R. Dihoff, at that time Coordinator of the African Language Program, and Gretchen Walsh, Head of the African Studies Library. The entries were gathered using several strategies. The largest number of them were found by taking the library's shelflist for the range PL 8000 to PL 8834, along with the ranges in PJ for Amharic and Somali. Only those entries representing dictionaries, grammars and readers were selected. These were supplemented by items in the African Studies Library pamphlet collection and backlog of uncataloged material. A strategy was developed for checking the subject catalog, but proved to be too cumbersome to be useful. The entries were then sorted by language, using Fivaz and Scott's African Languages: A Genetic and Decimalised Classification for Bibliographic and General Reference (Boston, G.K. Hall, 1977) as a guide, and indexed in several ways: by alternate language names and by format i.e., dictionaries, grammars, etc.

The update has benefited from a number of technological advances. The catalog of the entire collection of Boston University Libraries has been put on-line using Carlyle's TOMUS (Total On-line Multiple User System), which allows keyword searching of several fields, including title and subject. OCLC, a national cataloging database now allows on-line access to the authority file of Library of Congress subject headings; PCs in the African Studies Center with word processing and database management capability can access the TOMUS database through a modem connection, reducing the burden of keying the bibliography and making it possible to edit and manipulate the data to serve a variety of purposes.

In order to produce this preliminary version in time for the African Linguistics Conference, Gretchen Walsh checked the languages already in the original guide and created a list of references which were downloaded, formatted and edited on the ASC computer by Jenny Hochstadt. Searching the subject and title fields yielded a much wider range of material beyond the PL and PJ classification. Primarily these fell into DT (African history), GR (folklore), PN (collections of proverbs, riddles, etc.), M (Music, including scores and phonodiscs), but there were also items from the Theology Library and works on health, technology and mathematics. The scope was broadened to include works on aspects of the language as well as dictionaries, grammars and readers. Uncataloged materials were eliminated from the update, making all items mentioned easier to find.

For this preliminary version, no languages not in the first edition were added. The strategy for checking for additional languages was refined, and will be carried out for the revision. To prepare the index to alternate language names, each language name used as a heading in the original guide was checked on the LC subject authority file on OCLC, and cross references noted. These cross references were combined with Fivaz and Scott's alternative names and dialects. A great many anomalies were encountered, for which time did not permit solution. For the moment, a differing LC subject heading is shown in parentheses following the Fivaz and Scott heading. Language names for which there are serious ambiguities (for example, where one authority uses several language names as separate language names but the other groups them into one heading) are marked with an asterisk, and will be sorted out for the final version. Several other authorities should be consulted, including Mann and Dalby's new Thesaurus of African Languages (London, Hans Zell, 1987) and the Ethnologue. It is hoped that the Africanist linguists who obtain this guide will contribute to the solution of some problems of language name and grouping.

This version of the guide was being put to press as Boston University Libraries were in the process of loading an update to the database which will add some 40,000 records and improve access. It is planned to search the updated database for the full available list of language names. This expanded guide will further benefit from the planned revision of the index and arrangement.

Working on this guide has revealed a number of problems. One is that it is difficult to construct a complete and accurate guide to African language materials within a large library collection which has been cataloged over the years in accordance with LC and AACR (Anglo-American Cataloging Rules) standards. The accepted practice in assigning subject headings is to apply the most exact heading that is appropriate, and not to include a broader heading if a narrower one is used. Broader subject headings become meaningless in a large collection. For the purposes of compiling this guide, a heading "African languages" applied to every work dealing with any African language would have been ideal, even if it had produced thousands of entries. Such an heading would, however, be virtually useless to someone looking only for works on or in !Xu. It also became clear that works in African languages can be found in a wide range of call numbers, so that a shelf-list count is not sufficient. Developing a complete list of African language works in the collection is much easier with the on-line catalog, but still requires ingenuity and painstaking work.

Another pressing problem is terminology and the reconciling of various systems of language classification with LC subject headings. The computer has made library research vastly easier and faster, but it still ploddingly matches letter for letter in its searches, not related ideas and variant spellings. A search for Fulani will yield "0" in any library, even where there are a hundred works with the subject heading "Fulah language". Even libraries whose on-line catalogs include the feature of guiding the user from a heading not used to the heading used will only do so for forms of the subject which LC has entered as cross references.

There are other problems - difficulties of cataloging African language materials and getting them into a library database at all; problems of acquiring the books and other publications for libraries; obstacles to publishing them in the first place. But these are matters for discussion elsewhere.

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A Kanda	See Nupe
Abali	See Bali
Abam-Ohaffia	See Igbo
Abam-Ohafya	See Igbo
Abewa	See Nupe
Abigar	See Nuer
Abua	p. 1
Abuan	See Abua
Abyssinian	See Amharic
Accra	See Adangme
Accra	See Ga (Gã)
Achawa	See (ci) Yao
Acholi (Acoli)	p. 1
Acoli	See Acholi (Acoli)
Acooli	See Acholi (Acoli)
Acra	See Ga (Gã)
Ada	See Igbo
Adamawa dialect	See Fula (Fulah)
Adan	See Adangme
Adangbe	See Adangme
Adangme	p. 1
Adja	See Ewe
Adjao	See (ci) Yao
Adjaua	See (ci) Yao
Adsawa	See (ci) Yao
Adsoa	See (ci) Yao
Adya	See Ewe
Afan	See Galla (Oromo)
Afatime	See Avatime
Afema	See Anyi-Bawule
Afutu	See Awutu
Agar	See Dinka
Agbanyitu	See Gonja
Agni	See Anyi-Bawule
Agni-Baoule	See Anyi-Bawule
Aja	See Ewe
Ajawa	See (ci) Yao
Ak-A	See Akan
Akan	p. 1
Akem	See Akan
Akpafu	p. 3
Akra	See Ga (Gã)
Akuapem	See Akan
Akwapem	See Akan
Akwapim	See Akan
Akyem	See Akan
Alada	See Ewe
Alago	See Idoma
Ali	See Gbaya
Amampa	See Sherbro (Bullom)
Amanaya	See Nzeme (Nzima)
Amarigna	See Amharic
Amarinya	See Amharic
Ambo	See (Osi) Kwanyama (Kuanyama)